

AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

STRATEGIC SUCCESS OF SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT AGAINST  
LTTE REMAINS TENTATIVE DESPITE MILITARY SUCCESS

by

Jonathan E. Ford  
Supervisory Intelligence Analyst (SIA)  
Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

Advisor: Thomas G. Minehart

13 February 2016

## **Disclaimer**

The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the US government, the Department of Defense, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or Air University. In accordance with Air Force Instruction 51-303, it is not copyrighted, but is the property of the United States government.



## **Biography**

Jonathan Ford is assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. Prior to assignment at the War College, Mr. Ford managed a section of the FBI Field Intelligence Group at the Little Rock Field Office. Mr. Ford retired from the US Army in 2009 after serving 21 years in non-commissioned officer positions with the active and reserve components in positions of military police and intelligence. During his military service, Mr. Ford participated in the Persian Gulf War and Operation Iraqi Freedom.



## **Abstract**

By 2009, the Sri Lankan government (SLG) established or exploited a number of conditions which allowed for a successful military campaign to defeat the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). During the final phase of the war, the SLG used brute force against the LTTE, which had matured from an insurgency into a conventional force. The SLG changed its strategy against the LTTE because political efforts and coercive tactics failed to end the war for almost thirty years. However, the SLG military success did not change the conditions or perceptions which originally caused the conflict. To some extent, the SLG has exacerbated the problem by continuing to focus on military procurement and occupation in lieu of constitutional and social services reform. The SLG's military success without a political resolution increases the likelihood that the conflict will eventually resume unless the military operational success is supplemented with a long-term strategy to reasonably appease the Tamil population.

## Introduction

In 1948, Ceylon, an island country southeast of India, achieved independence from the United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> In 1956, the SLG established a new constitution, which recognized only Sinhalese as full citizens of the country, as well as recognizing Sinhala as the official language of Ceylon.<sup>2</sup> In 1972, the Ceylon government changed the name of Ceylon to Sri Lanka.<sup>3</sup> By the mid-1970s, a variety of groups claiming to represent the minority Tamil people in Sri Lanka argued for a separate Tamil state in northern and eastern Sri Lanka. The Tamil population took offense at an SLG change in university enrollment policy which advantaged the majority population and limited enrollment for the Tamils by instituting a quota system.<sup>4</sup> This, among other perceived social injustices, ultimately caused several anti-SLG groups to initiate criminal and violent tactics to achieve independence.<sup>5</sup>

In 1983, members of the LTTE, the largest anti-Sri Lankan group, attacked a Sri Lankan military patrol in the Jaffna District.<sup>6</sup> This attack is commonly viewed as the spark of a civil war, otherwise known as the Eelam War. The LTTE gradually increased to a sizeable military force which eventually absorbed, at times violently, all other insurgent groups in Sri Lanka.<sup>7</sup> Between 1983 and 2009, the LTTE conducted attacks against the SLG. At times the LTTE received support from other countries and financial support from the global Tamil diaspora.<sup>8</sup> The LTTE and SLG battled almost continuously during the three decade conflict except for brief periods where the parties attempted to negotiate a settlement.

Over time the SLG made a number of good decisions and the LTTE made a handful of strategic mistakes, which ultimately allowed the SLG to escalate military efforts and annihilate the LTTE in 2009. After the defeat of the LTTE, internal and external critics suggested the SLG used an annihilation strategy which resulted in not only the total destruction of the LTTE, but

also killed a large number of civilians.<sup>9</sup> In fact, for most of the Eelam War, the SLG applied a coercion strategy familiar to other wars. However, the SLG failed to keep adequate and continuous pressure against the LTTE during periods in which negotiations were attempted, thus minimizing the opportunity for a coercion strategy to encourage enemy capitulation. Instead, the SLG adjusted its military strategy to that of brute force, which some researchers have labeled an Iron Fist approach. While the SLG achieved a military success it has had difficulty translating the triumph into a strategic success through the application of social, political, and economic accommodations.

This paper will discuss factors that led to the SLG military defeat of the LTTE. In addition, this paper will compare the warfare strategy used by the SLG during the last phase of the Eelam War with the coercion strategies used during WWII. Lastly, this paper will discuss the Iron Fist approach used by the SLG in contrast to two other counterinsurgency (COIN) military successes and discuss whether the SLG has fully exploited their operational success against LTTE in order to minimize the likelihood of a resurgence of the civil war.

### **Thesis**

The SLG achieved operational success over LTTE using an Iron Fist approach; however, because of underlying grievances which remain unaddressed, strategic success will depend on arriving at a political accommodation with the Tamil people.

## Reasons for SLG Military Success

Since the end of the Eelam War, military and academic researchers have theorized about what made the SLG so successful in defeating the LTTE. In 2010, Stephen Battle<sup>i</sup> assessed that the SLG defeated the LTTE because the insurgency lost legitimacy with the local Tamil population.<sup>10</sup> Battle suggested that the LTTE's focus on external support, which largely evaporated after 9/11, created a substantial loss in financial and manpower support for operations.<sup>11</sup> Battle justifies his argument by noting the high level of forced conscription of the Tamil population into the LTTE ranks during the last phase of the war.<sup>12</sup>

In early 2011, Tarun Hindwan<sup>ii</sup> argued that the defeat resulted from a strategic LTTE blunder and a SLG transition to more efficient COIN warfare supported by the Indian government.<sup>13</sup> Hindwan believes the LTTE made a strategic blunder by assassinating former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991.<sup>14</sup> Hindwan assesses that this eroded Indian government support for the LTTE, as well as diminished support from the Tamil Nadu population in southern India.<sup>15</sup> Hindwan provided an additional argument that the SLG improved its capacity to conduct combined conventional and special operations forces operations which involved a combination of military offensives and civil influence efforts, as well as an increased partnership with the Indian government to degrade LTTE external support.<sup>16</sup> This provided the SLG time to establish internal security, build up and train forces, and ultimately launch major attacks in 2008.<sup>17</sup>

By late 2011 and early 2012 additional published research expanded the perspective on what factors led to the defeat of the LTTE. Herman Llorin<sup>iii</sup> articulated that a major factor in the

---

<sup>i</sup> Battle was a US Army major studying at the Naval Post Graduate School in 2010.

<sup>ii</sup> Hindwan was an Indian Air Force wing commander studying at the US Air Command and Staff College in 2011.

<sup>iii</sup> Llorin was a US Department of State attendee at the US Army Command and General Staff College in 2011.

SLG success was the remarkable increase in the size and training of the SLG military forces.<sup>18</sup>

In addition, Llorin remarked that this improvement in military posture was supplemented by a wider application of national power, which included an improvement in intelligence, renewed political will, and improved collaboration or support from the international community.<sup>19</sup> Eranda Chandradas<sup>iv</sup> expanded upon Llorin's focus on the adaptive COIN strategy used by the SLG military to defeat the LTTE.<sup>20</sup> Chandradas suggested the SLG military moved to a direct (kinetic) strategy during the final phase of the Eelam War, which eventually reduced the LTTE's capacity to operate and hold terrain.<sup>21</sup> Chandradas substantiated his argument by highlighting the SLG's use of continuous and focused small infantry maneuvers, as well as the expanded use of civil defense forces and the protection of the non-combatant population.<sup>22</sup>

From late 2012 until late 2013 three researchers published books regarding the defeat of the LTTE, and their consensus was that there was not one single variable that was a catalyst. Paul Moorcraft<sup>v</sup> focused both on what the SLG did correctly and the errors of the LTTE. In his view, the critical errors of the LTTE were political mistakes which included encouraging the Tamil population to avoid the Sri Lankan political process and the assassination of the former Indian prime minister.<sup>23</sup> Moorcraft viewed these efforts as eroding support and representation for the LTTE and the Tamil people.<sup>24</sup> Moorcraft indicated the SLG used an adaptive form of the Maoist insurgent strategy against the LTTE, in essence beating the LTTE at its own game, by displaying political will supported by the population and by trading space for time which led to a war of attrition.<sup>25</sup> Gordon Weiss<sup>vi</sup> opined that the geographic (island) situation provided an

---

<sup>iv</sup> Chandradas was a Sri Lankan Navy lieutenant attending the US Naval Post Graduate School in 2012.

<sup>v</sup> In 2012, Moorcraft was the Director of the Centre for Foreign Policy Analysis in London and a visiting professor at Cardiff University's School of Journalism.

<sup>vi</sup> In 2012, Weiss was a visiting scholar at Sydney University and war correspondent for Australia's *The Global Mail*. Weiss previously worked for the United Nations for 12 years in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Darfur, Haiti, and the United States.



advantage to the larger SLG forces (lack of sanctuary and escape for LTTE), and included in his assessment the importance of greater international and regional support which improved training, logistics, and intelligence for the SLG military.<sup>26</sup> Ahmed Hashim<sup>vii</sup> agreed with the other theorists in most areas. Hashim added that the SLG used a ‘whole of government’ approach which included an improvement in the size, strength, and efficiency of the SLG military.<sup>27</sup> Hashim concluded that the LTTE greatly underestimated the evolution of the SLG military leading up to the last phase of Eelam War.<sup>28</sup>

An underlying theme with all the theories regarding the outcome of the Eelam War orient towards which side more closely followed the principles of insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare provided by historical theorists, and then exploited advantages against their opponent who potentially ignored either basic principles or misunderstood the impact of variables neither side could control. One of the earliest theorists on guerilla warfare as a military strategy was Mao Zedong.<sup>29</sup> Mao provided a roadmap for establishing, maturing, and winning a guerilla war using principles that addressed political and military actions.<sup>30</sup> As an insurgent movement improves politically and strengthens militarily, Mao theorized the potential for guerilla warfare to succeed increases.<sup>31</sup> The three pronged approach suggested by Mao eventually matures to where a guerilla force establishes conventional military power with the capacity to overcome the enemy.<sup>32</sup> However, due to the geography and vast differences in military size and technology by 2008, the LTTE was unable to match the military strength of the SLG. The maturing of the LTTE into a conventional military force, structured with infantry battalions and companies as well as a complimentary naval force, allowed the SLG to focus its efforts more efficiently through coordinated and sustained military operations.

---

<sup>vii</sup> In 2013, Hashim was an associate professor in security studies at the Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

A later COIN theorist, David Galula, echoed Mao's focus on the consideration of force in 1958 – to include when to mass and how it is used.<sup>33</sup> Galula emphasized that an insurgency force must stay fluid due to a lack of resources.<sup>34</sup> Galula remarked that an insurgent force should avoid rigidity and structure until they can achieve a balance of forces against their opponent.<sup>35</sup> The underlying theme to Galula's statement reinforced even the Clausewitzian notion that a significant deciding factor in waging war is the capacity to field the larger and more capable military force.<sup>36</sup> Since the geography did not lend the advantage for the LTTE to fully develop in size equal to the SLG forces and the political will of the LTTE did not wane regardless of missing these critical Mao-Galula-Clausewitzian principles, the final outcome became a military solution for the opponent with the most military advantages. By the end of the Eelam War, the SLG had established a much larger and more efficient military force and degraded the lack of support for the LTTE, which was operating without a lasting sanctuary.

### **Coercion versus Brute Force**

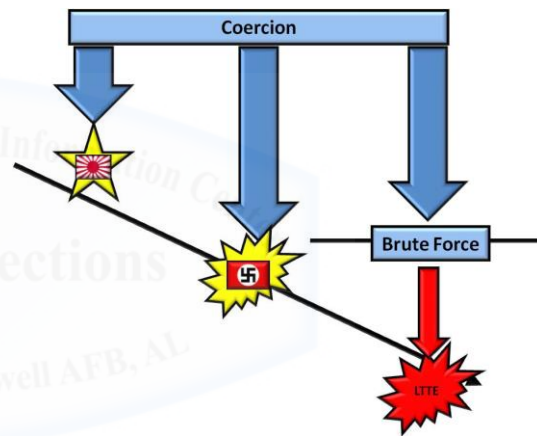
Although direct military force can be an ineffective method for defeating a guerilla force, there is evidence to suggest otherwise when the guerilla force matures into a conventional force. The use of military force amounts to two basic principles. A government may attempt to annihilate the opposing force completely, or through military force against the enemy or supporting population, the government can apply significant military pressure to coerce the enemy to surrender. A government needs to apply continued pressure and demonstrate a political will to remain committed to the effort.<sup>37</sup> In effect, this continued effort often results in substantial enemy attrition up to the point that the enemy decides an end of the conflict is necessary for survival.<sup>38</sup> A comparison of the Allied and US air power campaign against Germany and Japan during World War II exemplifies this contrast.

During WWII the United States participated in an extensive Allied bombing campaign of Germany. Between 1942 and 1945, the Allied strategy adjusted between targeting large military forces in mass and the industrial or civilian centers of Germany. During this period the United States participated in dropping ordinance which caused approximately 7.5 million civilians to become homeless, while killing and wounding another 305,000 and 780,000, respectively.<sup>39</sup> All of this occurred while Allied air power continued to limit German military air and ground units from resupply or unfettered mobility.<sup>40</sup> Even with substantial economic and military losses, Allied forces were required to continually invade inward, into the heart of Germany, because the principal leader failed to capitulate.<sup>41</sup> Although Allied war power was responsible for substantial losses to the German war machine and capacity to wage war, the last days of the Nazi empire remained a street level—city to city—fight until German units finally surrendered in Berlin after the death of Hitler.<sup>42</sup> If the German military machine had elected to fight to the end, the attrition strategy would have likely resulted into the eventual annihilation of German forces because they were surrounded. By the time of their surrender, the Germans were unable to retreat to sanctuary and reconsolidate for a later fight. The coercive US air power campaign against Japan achieved an alternate outcome. After years of naval battles and island invasions, the United States escalated an air bombardment campaign. This allowed for a period of preparation to consider the prospect of an invasion into mainland Japan. Instead of waiting to be invaded, Japan (which is already geographically isolated and unable to achieve any further sanctuary) elected to stop the war based upon the US air bombardment which ultimately killed approximately 900,000 civilians, leaving another 22 million homeless.<sup>43</sup>

The situation in Germany and Japan, although similar in that coercive strategies killed a high number of civilians and military personnel, had differing outcomes based upon the leader's

commitment to continue fighting long after a reasonable hope to win was lost. The Japanese Emperor, realizing that the United States had in effect surrounded his country and was willing to continue with remarkable pressure, elected to stop fighting long before ground forces became engaged in street level—city to city—fighting.<sup>44</sup> By contrast Hitler allowed the fighting to continue until the bitter end, regardless of military and civilian casualties.

Like Germany during WWII, the LTTE leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, did not capitulate regardless of the attrition of his forces during the last phase of the Eelam War. Instead, Prabhakaran consolidated his remaining forces into a defensive position intermingled with the Tamil civilian population, which was not allowed to flee for safety.<sup>45</sup> Even though some speculate that LTTE forces attempted to surrender during the very last days, the LTTE tradition of committing suicide attacks in close proximity to SLG personnel complicated attempts for surrender.<sup>46</sup> In addition, loyal LTTE members shot both members and



civilians who attempted to abandon the cause or flee during the final months of the Eelam War.<sup>47</sup> This ultimately caused the SLG military to approach along seven infantry division<sup>viii</sup> attack routes in a slow and deliberate manner to engage LTTE personnel while attempting to locate civilians intermingled and dressed like the enemy.<sup>48</sup> This brute force strategy caused the SLG military to suffer more casualties than at any other period during the prolonged conflict.<sup>49</sup> Given this fact, historical interpretations of SLG efforts which suggest the end strategy was designed to kill all enemy and civilians indiscriminately appear incorrect. In fact, if the SLG forces had

<sup>viii</sup> The 53<sup>rd</sup>, 55<sup>th</sup>, 56<sup>th</sup>, 57<sup>th</sup>, 58<sup>th</sup>, 59<sup>th</sup>, and 61st Infantry Divisions participated in the final ground invasion into northern Sri Lanka between 2008 and 2009.

intended to apply a strategy of indiscriminate civilian casualties from on the onset, the SLG military would have most likely held at the perimeter and allowed SLG air and artillery forces to continue a bombardment with no ground advance rather than initiate and sustain operations which were so difficult and costly. By the end of the war, the SLG military achieved precisely what it needed and had the capacity to achieve – a military solution.

### **Military Solutions versus Political Solutions**

*The use of force alone is temporary. It may subdue for a moment; but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again; and a nation is not governed, which is perpetually to be conquered.*

*~ Edmund Burke, Second Speech on Conciliation with America, 1775*

By reviewing historical and some fairly recent insurgency defeats, the Iron Fist approach appears most successful when a political resolution is achieved at the conclusion of the military conflict. As with any form of warfare, how you win is as important as if you win. In 2013, RAND published an analysis of all insurgencies which have occurred since World War II until 2010.<sup>50</sup> RAND researchers found that governments use two different types of COIN strategies to defeat insurgents: Iron Fist and Motive Focused.<sup>51</sup> The Iron Fist approach involved governments primarily focusing kinetic operations against insurgent forces, whereas the Motive Focused approach leveraged efforts to address the socio-economic issues which led to the insurgency.<sup>52</sup> RAND based their analysis on 59 insurgencies, which specifically did not include twelve other conflicts commonly viewed as conflicts that were “fought against the tide of history.”<sup>ix,53</sup> Of the 59 insurgencies, RAND determined that the win-loss ratio between COIN and insurgent forces was fairly even, however, the Iron Fist approach provided the lower percentage of wins per times attempted.<sup>54</sup> RAND researchers suggested that of the 59 insurgencies analyzed, 44 COIN efforts involved an Iron Fist approach (75 percent), while only 15 of the COIN efforts (25 percent) were

---

<sup>ix</sup> Based upon a methodology to define an insurgency, RAND researchers compiled a list of 71 insurgencies, however, removed 12 based upon a core premise that the conflict was in support of the end of colonialism or the end of apartheid.

deemed a Motive Focused approach.<sup>55</sup> Of the 44 times the Iron Fist approach was attempted, COIN forces won only 37 percent of the time.<sup>56</sup> In contrast, COIN forces won 73 percent of the time when a Motive Focused approach was used.<sup>57</sup>

A review of the RAND data also highlighted how well these approaches have succeeded since 9/11. Of the six insurgencies ending after 9/11 using the Iron Fist approach, three (50 percent) have been won by the government forces.<sup>58</sup> However, of the two insurgencies ending after 9/11 using the Motive Focused approach, both of them resulted in a government win in defeating the insurgency.<sup>59</sup> In essence, while an Iron Fist approach can be successful, it will not likely achieve the same success rate as using the Motive Focused approach.

The United Kingdom (UK)-Northern Ireland and Indonesian-Aceh conflicts are reasonable comparisons to demonstrate how an Iron Fist approach followed with a political resolution resulted in government success in achieving a positive effect. According to the RAND study, both of these conflicts involved an Iron Fist approach by the government forces to defeat an insurgency. In Northern Ireland, the British government used a direct military approach which ultimately culminated with a series of negotiated agreements between 1998 and 2000.<sup>60</sup> The Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) wanted to create an independent state based upon ideological and ethnic differences.<sup>61</sup> Like the LTTE, the PIRA relied on considerable external support and fought for over 30 years on an island which at times limited the possibility for sanctuary.<sup>62</sup> Unlike the Eelam War, leaders of the insurgency and the sovereign government conducted polling and limited surveys to determine what factors and conditions would provide the greatest degree of negotiated satisfaction between the groups.<sup>63</sup> By 2000, the British government repealed discriminatory legislation and assisted Northern Ireland in creating a number of electoral governing bodies operated by the voting population.<sup>64</sup> As

paramilitary groups increasingly agreed to the provisions and participated in weapons turn-in programs, the British Army slowly moved out of areas which were awash with violence for the preceding 30 years.<sup>65</sup> The British government's focus on local governance, jobs, and education was crucial after the shooting war stopped and substantially assisted in reconciliation.<sup>66</sup> Britain's political resolution was the culmination of decades of direct action warfare against an anti-government militancy determined to keep fighting.

The conflict between the Indonesian government and the Aceh movement (Free Aceh or GAM) was similar to the UK-Northern Ireland situation in that an Iron Fist approach suddenly culminated with a political settlement. The Aceh people desired an independent state on the northwestern portion of Sumatra, the most western island of Indonesia.<sup>67</sup> Between 1976 and 2004, the Indonesian government attempted to crush the GAM insurgency with direct military force plus intermittent attempts to negotiate peace.<sup>68</sup> By late 2003, the Indonesian government determined that a negotiated settlement was unlikely and launched a large scale military operation to defeat the insurgency.<sup>69</sup> According to the insurgent forces, the Indonesian military operations between 2003 and 2004 accounted for a loss of over 80 percent of their members.<sup>70</sup> Like the allegations against the SLG, Amnesty International accused the Indonesian government of killing between 10,000 and 30,000 people during the last phase of the conflict.<sup>71</sup> In late 2004, based upon the tragedy and impact of a tsunami, the Indonesian government and insurgent forces negotiated a peace settlement for the greater good of the populous which desperately needed international aid.<sup>72</sup> The Indonesian-GAM peace agreement signed the following year allowed for expanded political autonomy of the Aceh people, which stopped just short of creating an independent state.<sup>73</sup> The UK-Northern Ireland and Indonesian-Aceh conflicts demonstrate that



regardless of the accomplishments of an Iron Fist method, political resolutions are important in order to alter variables which led to the conflict.

Since the military success in 2009, the SLG has continued to maintain a substantial military presence in areas previously controlled by the LTTE.<sup>74</sup> In fact, the SLG has erected monuments in these areas to honor key battles won and significant military leaders to memorialize the military success.<sup>75</sup> Within the economic arena, the SLG military maintains oversight of much of the activities which impact the public, to include street markets, social service programs, as well as controls to limit large gatherings to voice opinion or dissent<sup>76</sup> On the political landscape, the Tamil people have received greater representation within the SLG government with the establishment of new parties and newly elected representatives, but the numbers are not numerically representative of the population.<sup>77</sup>

In theory, the SLG increased its military war machine to provide security and defeat the LTTE, which was accomplished in 2009. Decisions in 2014 and 2015 to continue increasing the size of their military suggest the SLG lacks confidence that the LTTE military defeat will achieve lasting peace.<sup>78</sup> These efforts also appear to conflict with Anthony Joes<sup>x</sup> four main points necessary to achieve peace after a COIN military success, which he highlighted in 2004 as: an effective amnesty program, a legitimate government supported by the populace, conservative military actions and policies, and the redress of grievances.<sup>79</sup> As of 2014, the SLG has continued down a course which appears contrary to modern discussions regarding achieving COIN success.

In 2015, Maithripala Sirisena was elected as President of Sri Lanka based upon an election platform which included a focus on political, social, and economic programs to assist in reintegration and reconciliation efforts to unify the country.<sup>80</sup> Sirisena has indicated a

---

<sup>x</sup> In 2004, Joes was a professor at St. Joseph's University and a visiting professor at the US Army War College.



willingness to address internal and international grievances about what happened during the last phase of the Eelam War, as well as what has been done since the end of offensive military operations.<sup>81</sup> The impact of this political change remains to be seen. And given that the SLG operates in a semi-democratic manner, whereby a population periodically elects representatives to continue or institute changes in government, there is a concern that the SLG will not have the political will to address all minority grievances or follow previously identified post-COIN processes to achieve a positive end state as articulated by Joes. As well, this remains concerning because Sirisena only defeated his predecessor with 51 percent of the popular vote, with the remaining votes predominately going to followers of a hard line military agenda.<sup>82</sup> These variables are overshadowed by the continued debate of whether reform is necessary over a military solution. In 2014, Paul Staniland<sup>xi</sup> believed that the LTTE was unlikely to re-mobilize because of the profound social dislocation and control of the Tamil population as a result of government policies.<sup>83</sup> Staniland's estimate is concerning as it potentially encourages the SLG to remain committed to the military occupation strategy.

---

<sup>xi</sup> In 2014, Staniland was an associate professor of political science and co-director of the program on international security policy at the University of Chicago.

## Recommendations

The success of the SLG defeat of the LTTE should be gauged by how well the SLG can construct a long-term solution that mitigates the need for either side to return to war. The SLG need only provide an adequate degree of resolution to suggest a return to hostilities would achieve less than the current peace. The SLG must continually provide enough incentives to allow the Tamil people to choose peace versus war. If the SLG is able to maintain a positive cost-benefit scenario towards peace, the likelihood of a return to a military conflict will decrease with the passing of each generation. In order to address the Tamil population's grievances which led to the war, the SLG should re-enforce and expand programs directed towards education, the economy, and government accountability.

### *Education, Economy, and Accountability*

After military offensive operations ceased in May 2009, the SLG began re-establishing basic humanitarian services in the northern area of Sri Lanka, which included providing some educational opportunities for displaced civilians. Due to the high number of displaced civilians and infrastructure destruction, the SLG made education a lower priority to focus on other immediate priorities. Most SLG educational efforts were initially focused on elementary through high school levels. This was an important first step as it provided families a capacity to re-establish normalcy in their lives as well as allow parents to receive assistance in child care and rearing. The SLG should increase its focus on educational opportunities for older teenagers and young adults in trade skills needed by the local economy. As the SLG approaches the seven year anniversary of the conclusion of the war, a substantial

#### Recommendations

- Expand educational opportunities for young adults
- Focus education on technical and trade skills
- Improve infrastructure to stimulate economy
- Remain committed to political reform

number of young adults are likely concerned about what measures the government is taking to assist them in establishing employment opportunities and improve their personal quality of life. Many within this age bracket are individuals old enough to have personal opinions about the conflict based upon direct experiences. It is likely that young adults within the affected Tamil concentrated areas were personally impacted through displacement, loss in family income, and injury or death of immediate or extended family members.

The SLG should focus educational opportunities on this young adult demographic which would in turn provide greater opportunities to support the growing economy in the area. As the young adult demographic becomes increasingly involved in focusing their efforts on educational opportunities pointed towards economic futures, they will most likely be less inspired to risk their future on low intensity warfare as a means of conflict resolution. The SLG should increase the number of trade schools in the area that directly tie to increasing humanitarian assistance or further economic stability in predominantly Tamil regions. The SLG should direct its educational improvements towards six-month to one-year programs at trade schools that teach skills within construction, medical services, human services, and industry. The SLG should focus the efforts of the trade schools in providing an educated and motivated work force towards economic opportunities supported by the government.

As individuals within the Tamil population demonstrate a desire to increase their technical skills, the SLG should identify locations within the economy to employ the newly trained workforce. In some areas, the SLG should specifically create programs that invest in infrastructure development and restoration using the technically trained Tamil population. The SLG should consider modeling some of their efforts after US President Franklin Roosevelt's

New Deal, whereby the government established significant construction programs to employ an otherwise highly unemployed population.

Lastly, the SLG must remain committed to the political direction and focus articulated during the early 2015 elections. The opportunity to influence real change may be short lived, especially since Sri Lanka continues to increase its military posture, which includes a de-investment in social services, amid a political landscape that may not remain constant. Any move backward, perceived by the Tamil people towards hard-line policies against them, provides an even greater catalyst for future problems. These efforts must also include a commitment by the SLG to address the allegations by the international community regarding how the last phase of war was conducted and why so many civilian lives were lost. Civilian casualties are often an unintended consequence of warfare, and the SLG should make more effort to structure the narrative regarding what happened and the way forward through reconciliation, rather than let the past taint their future.

## Conclusion

The SLG defeated the LTTE after a prolonged war using a decisive military strategy which ultimately killed or captured most, if not all, of the LTTE members. Many theorists agree that the SLG military success included a complex number of variables, which included geography, military advancement, and varying degrees of support by external nations or groups. Regardless, the SLG maintains a large and modern military force which provides for external national security, as well the capacity to maintain security within Sri Lanka.

Even though the SLG attempted to coerce the LTTE to surrender through periods of military operations and political negotiations, the leader of the LTTE decided to continue fighting until all of his forces were surrounded, in a deliberate last stand to hold onto territory. Unlike some conflicts where coercion achieves success, the decision by the enemy leader on whether to surrender became the critical variable on how much force was required to win. In Japan, a rational decision by the Emperor ended the war before a ground invasion and annihilation of his forces became necessary. In Germany, the Allies were unable to coerce a surrender of Germany until after the death of Hitler. In Sri Lanka, the SLG was unable to coerce the LTTE leader to end the war, thus causing the SLG to use brute force to destroy the enemy's forces – what RAND calls an Iron Fist approach.

However, the SLG defeat of the LTTE did not alter the underlying causes for the war. As suggested by RAND, most insurgency defeats after 9/11 still require the government to make political accommodations to achieve lasting peace. Since the end of the Eelam War, the SLG has occupied previously held LTTE areas and attempted some reconciliation efforts. Without additional efforts at reconciliation focused on addressing perceived equality issues, the potential for a resurgence of violence by the Tamil people remains. For over two hundred years which

included discussions by Edward Burke regarding the US Revolution and afterward unrest within the British Empire, the need for political resolution has remained a constant theme in ending conflict. The military success of the SLG during the Eelam provided an opportunity for stability, reformation, and reconciliation towards lasting peace. The failure to achieve political resolutions in Sri Lanka may provide the latest example of a missed opportunity to learn from the past.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Asoka Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity and Political Economy* (iUniverse Inc., New York, 2009), 29.

<sup>2</sup> Bandarage, 42-56.

<sup>3</sup> Bandarage, 64-66.

<sup>4</sup> Bandarage, 47-54, 91.

<sup>5</sup> Bandarage, 95-97.

<sup>6</sup> Bandarage, 97.

<sup>7</sup> Bandarage, 146-149.

<sup>8</sup> Bandarage, 116-117.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations, *Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka* (United Nations General Assembly, New York, 2011), ii-iii.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Battle, *Lessons in Legitimacy – The LTTE End-Game of 2007-2009* (Naval Post Graduate School, Monterey, 2009), 43-47.

<sup>11</sup> Battle, v.

<sup>12</sup> Battle, 29-30.

<sup>13</sup> Tarun Hindwan, *Defeat of LTTE – A Lesson Learned in COIN Operations* (US Air Command and Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, 2011), v, 19.

<sup>14</sup> Hindwan, 14.

<sup>15</sup> Hindwan, 15-16.

<sup>16</sup> Hindwan, 19, 28-29.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Herman Llorin, *The Effective Use of Elements of National Power in Counterinsurgency: A Study on the Lessons from Sri Lanka 1983-2004 and 2005-2009* (US Army Command and Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, 2011), 37-44.

<sup>19</sup> Llorin, 36-37, 46-48, 55, 66.

<sup>20</sup> Eranda Chandradas, *Adaptive COIN in Sri Lanka – What Contributed to the Demise of the LTTE?* (Naval Post Graduate School, Monterey, 2012), 7.

<sup>21</sup> Chandradas, 73-76, 79, 97.

<sup>22</sup> Chandradas, 81.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Moorcraft, *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers: The Rare Victory of Sri Lanka's Long War* (Pen & Sword Books Ltd., South Yorkshire, 2012), 166-167.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Moorcraft, 168.

<sup>26</sup> Gordon Weiss, *The Cage: The Fight for Sri Lanka and the Last Days of the Tamil Tigers* (Bellevue Literary Press, New York, 2012), 219.

<sup>27</sup> Hashim, 187-189.

<sup>28</sup> Hashim, 192.

<sup>29</sup> Mao Zedong, *On Protracted War*, (Selected Works of Mao Zedong, 1938), 2004, [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2\\_09.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_09.htm).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Frederick A. Praeger Publishing, London, 1958), 1-104.

<sup>34</sup> Galula, 9-10.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1976), 194-197.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Pape, *Bombing to Win* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1996), 14-19.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Pape, 271-272.

<sup>40</sup> Pape, 264-266.

<sup>41</sup> Pape, 283-286.

<sup>42</sup> Pape, 255-256.

<sup>43</sup> Pape, 104.

<sup>44</sup> Pape, 134-135.

<sup>45</sup> Moorcraft, 135.

<sup>46</sup> Hashim, 161-162.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Hashim, 148-163.

<sup>49</sup> David Sabapathy, *Sri Lankan Battles Take Heavy Casualties* (Tamil Eelam News Services, Colombo, 2008), 19 November 2008, [http://www.tamileelamnews.com/news/publish/tns\\_10461.shtml](http://www.tamileelamnews.com/news/publish/tns_10461.shtml).

<sup>50</sup> RAND Corporation, *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgents* (National Defense Research Institute, Santa Monica, 2013), iii.

<sup>51</sup> RAND, 7-8.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> RAND, 71-73.

<sup>54</sup> RAND, 74-76.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Thomas Henriksen, *What Really Happened in Northern Ireland's Counterinsurgency: Revision and Revelation* (Tampa, FL: Joint Special Operations University, 2008), 46.



<sup>61</sup> J. Bowyer Bell. *The IRA 1968-2000: Analysis of a Secret Army* (London, England: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 26-29.

<sup>62</sup> Bell, 37-40.

<sup>63</sup> Bell, 46.

<sup>64</sup> Henriksen, 32-33.

<sup>65</sup> Henriksen, 27.

<sup>66</sup> Henriksen, 30.

<sup>67</sup> Congressional Research Service (CRS), *CRS Report for Congress: Indonesian Separatist Movement in Aceh* (US Library of Congress, Washington DC, 2002), 1-6.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Edward Aspinall, *Aceh/Indonesia: Conflict Analysis and Options for Systemic Conflict Transformation* (Australian National University, Berghof Foundation for Peace Support: Canberra, Australia, 2005), 2.

<sup>70</sup> Aspinall, 9.

<sup>71</sup> Amnesty International, *Time to Face the Past: Justice for Past Abuses in Indonesia's Aceh Province* (London, United Kingdom: Amnesty International Publications, 2005), 5.

<sup>72</sup> Aspinall, 2.

<sup>73</sup> Aspinall, 8-10.

<sup>74</sup> Sam Jones, *Sri Lanka Accused of Waging 'Silent War' as Tamil Land is Appropriated by Army* (London, England: The Guardian), 28 May 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/may/28/sri-lanka-army-land-grabs-tamil-displacement-report-oakland-institute>.

<sup>75</sup> Vishal Arora, *Sri Lanka's Slow Shift on War Attitude* (Tokyo, Japan: The Diplomat), 9 June 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/06/sri-lankas-slow-shift-on-war-attitude/>.

<sup>76</sup> Jones.

<sup>77</sup> Sanjal Shastri, Results of the Sri Lankan Parliamentary Elections: What Are Its Implications for the Peace Process? (Noida, India: CNN – Indian Broadcast Network), 26 August 2015, <http://www.ibnlive.com/news/world/results-of-the-sri-lankan-parliamentary-elections-what-are-its-implications-for-the-peace-process-1051663.html>.

<sup>78</sup> Colombo Telegraph, *A Record Increase in Sri Lanka's Defence Expenses for 2015* (Colombo, Sri Lanka), 27 September 2014, <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/a-record-increase-in-sri-lankas-defence-expenses-for-2015/>.

<sup>79</sup> Anthony James Joes, *Resisting Rebellion: History and Politics of Counterinsurgency* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 33.

<sup>80</sup> Gabriel Domínguez, *Introducing Maithripala Sirisena - Sri Lanka's new president* (Bonn, Germany: Deutsche Welle), 9 January 2015, <http://www.dw.com/en/introducing-maithripala-sirisena-sri-lankas-new-president/a-18181694>.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 177.

## Bibliography

- Ahmed Hashim. *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka's Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.
- Amnesty International. *Time to Face the Past: Justice for Past Abuses in Indonesia's Aceh Province*. London, United Kingdom: Amnesty International Publications, 2005.
- Anthony James Joes. *Resisting Rebellion: History and Politics of Counterinsurgency*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2004.
- Asoka Bandarage. *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity and Political Economy*. Bloomington, NY: iUniverse, 2009.
- Carl von Clausewitz. *On War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976.
- Colombo Telegraph. *A Record Increase in Sri Lanka's Defence Expenses for 2015*, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2014.
- Congressional Research Service (CRS). *CRS Report for Congress: Indonesian Separatist Movement in Aceh*. US Library of Congress, Washington DC, 2002.
- David Galula. *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. London, England: Fredrick A. Praeger Publishing, 1958.
- David Sabapathy. *Sri Lankan Battles Take Heavy Casualties*. Colombo, Sri Lanka: Tamil Eelam News Services, 2008.
- Edward Aspinall. *Aceh/Indonesia: Conflict Analysis and Options for Systemic Conflict Transformation*. Australian National University, Berghof Foundation for Peace Support: Canberra, Australia, 2005.
- Eranda Malaka Chandradasa. *Adaptive COIN in Sri Lanka – What Contributed to the Demise of the LTTE*. Monterey, CA: Naval Post Graduate School, 2012.
- Frances Harrison. *Still Counting the Dead: Survivors of Sri Lanka's Hidden War*. Toronto, ON: Anansi International, 2012.
- Gabriel Domínguez. *Introducing Maithripala Sirisena - Sri Lanka's new president*, Bonn, Germany: Deutsche Welle, 2015.
- Gordon Weiss. *The Cage: The Fight for Sri Lanka and the Last Days of the Tamil Tigers*. New York, NY: Bellevue Literary Press, 2012.

- Herman Llorin. *The Effective Use of Elements of National Power in Countersurgency: A Study on the Lessons from Sri Lanka 1983-2004 and 2005-2009*. Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and Staff College, 2011.
- J. Bowyer Bell. *The IRA 1968-2000: Analysis of a Secret Army*. London, England: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000.
- Mao Zedong. *On Protracted War*. Selected Works of Mao Zedong, 1938.
- Paul Moorcraft. *Total Destruction of the Tamil Tigers: The Rare Victory of Sri Lanka's Long War*, South Yorkshire, England: Pen & Sword Books Ltd., 2012.
- Paul Staniland. *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014.
- RAND Corporation. *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgents*, Santa Monica, CA: National Defense Research Institute, 2014.
- Robert Pape. *Bombing to Win*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996.
- Robert J. Schexnayder. *The Prachanada Path and Oglagh na hEireann: A Comparative Study of the Insurgencies in Nepal and Northern Ireland*, Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and Staff College, 2008.
- Sam Jones. *Sri Lanka Accused of Waging 'Silent War' as Tamil Land is Appropriated by Army*, London, England: The Guardian, 2015, 2015.
- Sanjal Shastri. *Results of the Sri Lankan Parliamentary Elections: What Are Its Implications for the Peace Process?*, Noida, India: CNN – Indian Broadcast Network, 2015.
- Steven Battle. *Lessons in Legitimacy – The LTTE End-Game of 2007-2009*, Monterey, CA: Naval Post Graduate School, 2009.
- Tarun Hindwan. *Defeat of LTTE – A Lesson Learned in COIN Operations*, Montgomery, AL: US Air Command and Staff College, 2011.
- Thomas Henriksen. *What Really Happened in Northern Ireland's Counterinsurgency: Revision and Revelation*. Tampa, FL: Joint Special Operations University, 2008.
- United Nations. *Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka*, New York, NY: United Nations, 2011.
- Vishal Arora. *Sri Lanka's Slow Shift on War Attitude*, Tokyo, Japan: The Diplomat, 2015.